

Summer Checklist - OCTBR

This checklist is based on the OCTBR (Online Course Teaching and Building Rubric).

Its primary purpose is to aid faculty members who have approximately 2 months or less to design and deploy their course for a new school year, whether or not it is an adapted or brand new course.

It is not prescriptive – some scenarios or aspects won't suit your class or program, and therefore should not be used – but a tool to help create courses with best practices.

It can also be used as a third party evaluation tool, in order for faculty members to assess several core practices that positively impact learning in an online course.

Course Overview

Introduction to Instructor and Program

- ☐ My site lists my email and office telephone and best times to be reached.
- ☐ I have listed specific times & locations through semester for both my online and face-to-face office hours.
- ☐ I have a list of email addresses and office telephone numbers for program and/or department, and links to my program and department websites.
- ☐ I confirm what the expected turnaround time will be for email replies, such as “within 48 to 72 hours, Monday through Friday”.
- ☐ I can also offer a link to my distance learning (DL) students, to an online learning readiness assessment (example: the [Penn State](#) or [Stanislaus State](#) assessments), so learners can self-assess their abilities, attitudes and preparedness for online courses.

Course Introduction

- ☐ I have an overview of my course, explaining the course's purpose and objectives, and its format (online, hybrid, PBL, etc).
- ☐ Rules of conduct and netiquette are defined for learners.
- ☐ I have stated the expected turnaround for feedback on assignments.
- ☐ There's a clear site “entrance” with an introduction to the course, on the main landing page or as a top level folder (“Start Here: Introduction”), allowing my students to quickly and repeatedly find time-sensitive, organized materials.
- ☐ My syllabus is provided in Word and PDF format (using the official school or department template if required); it includes my contact information and office hours, a summary of course goals and objectives, expectations for student work, and due dates.
- ☐ I will link any policies on late work including at the department and university levels.

Course Organization & Navigation

- ☐ My content is structured in course folders, which are based either on topics, weeks of instruction, or a similar structure. They are easily navigated, and intuitive. The course navigation structure is consistent, using both text and icon information.
- ☐ Navigation is chunked into high level sections based on sequence of instruction: there are no unnecessary clicks for learners to access a new topic. (For instance, students do not have to first click “Content” before they can access “The Circulatory System” section.) For usability and quick access, I avoid nesting material more than two levels from the top menu, or top-most course level.
- ☐ Navigation text labels are descriptive yet concise (“The Circulatory System” is better, both descriptive and concise, than “Week 2” [not descriptive, but concise] or “A Thorough Introduction to the Circulatory System and the Wonders Therein” [descriptive, but not concise])
- ☐ All sequenced content is listed in the course (For example, a folder of materials that goes live in seven weeks says so: “Nutrition Needs for Professional Athletes: Opens March 17th”).
- ☐ More than half of the course organization and content (content readings, assessments, assignments) are available at the time the course is opened to students. I clarify when additional material will go live.
- ☐ Tools or links I won’t be using in the course have been removed from the menu.
- ☐ Students can also explore through navigation out of order, where it does not impact learning negatively. Time-gated information serves a specific purpose (such as a high stakes test that cannot be taken too early in the semester).

Accessibility Information

- ☐ For students who have accessibility concerns, I have linked to my school’s Disabilities page, and include text that explains how to request accommodation through the campus ADA officer.
- ☐ I can also link to FAQs about ADA and disability services for learners.
- ☐ To help students with visual impairments, I have alternative or “alt” text for graphics.
- ☐ Since color-blindness is common (4-8% among different populations) I don’t use color alone to convey information – for instance, instead of having crucial words highlighted in red only, I use red text with underlining.
- ☐ My menu items are easy to read and high contrast, using a palette that make my course easier to use for learners with visual disabilities (including color-blind users).
- ☐ If I have text that students will have to read at length on-line, it’s in a sans-serif font like Tahoma, Futura, or Verdana.
- ☐ Transcripts or captions are provided for audio or videos linked into the course
- ☐ No multimedia or element in the course requires mouse interaction; for instance, a key can be pressed OR the mouse used to interact with embedded multimedia.
- ☐ Wherever possible, I mention that content will open in a new window or tab.
- ☐ I’m avoiding flickering, blinding, scrolling and auto-updating items on my course, including embedded items and videos.
- ☐ I also, when creating a form in my course, use labels (“First name”) rather than placeholder text (“What is your first name?”), and they can be completed using tab keys.

Accessibility Information (continued)

- ☐ My Word documents are designed with styles (such as headings and subheadings), and alternative text, and I use Word's built-in accessibility checker.
- ☐ My PowerPoint documents avoid vertically merged cells, placeholders and text boxes that cause issues for screen readers.
- ☐ I can add PowerPoint documents to Slideshare, which generates transcriptions and can be quickly embedded into Blackboard or other learning managements systems.

Instructional Design

- ☐ My course's learning activities, practice and assessments are consistent with any student outcomes or objectives (SLOs) in my course, and have a basic structure from one content folder to another that's easy for students to follow. I state how assignments, practice, and activities connect to student learning outcomes, so my students better understand why, not only what, they're learning.
- ☐ I make standards and requirements for succeeding in assignments, including technical needs (e.g. "You must download Skype for Business to complete this assignment"), both where students are submitting their work or taking assessments, and in the syllabus. That way, my students can prepare better, or download needed software, as soon as possible.
- ☐ I have taken some time to create or share learning materials or assessments in different formats, to accommodate diverse learning preferences. For instance, I may have short audio microlectures, created in MP3 format, that students can download to their cell phones and listen to during breaks; or I created a diagram where students must fill in the "legend" or blank spaces, explaining parts of the graphic; or I share both a journal article and a short video explaining aspects of the same topic.

Our Academic Community

- ☐ I have links on my course to help my students, especially those who are distance students, participate in our academic community. These resources may have been created by my school's instructional designer, as a resources page, or as part of a LMS course, making them easy to add. For instance, one OCTBR resources course includes the school's Honor Code, academic success resources like "Seven Habits of Highly Effective College Students", links to the Student Ombudsman, Testing Center, Office of Student Affairs, Parking Services, a campus map and a summary of FERPA and HIPAA. All can be easily copied into a course.
- ☐ I also have a link to the bookstore, a list of required books, test-taking tips, a link to the school's Academic Survival Guide, information about accessible study rooms and locations, and a link to our department, and advising.
- ☐ I have information on background checks and annual required training, and the bulletin for my school.

Additional Academic Resources

- ☐ I have a link to GradResources.org, which provides many resources for students in graduate programs.
- ☐ I have shared relevant links from Purdue University's [OWL \(Online Writing Lab\)](http://OWL(OnlineWritingLab)), to help my students' writing and research skills.
- ☐ I link to other third party documents that help students organize time, energy and succeed in school.

Resources for Student Health

- ❑ To support wellness, I also have links to the main Student Health page, the Mental Health Crisis line, a link to suicide prevention information, [information regarding Veterans](#), and a link to an alcohol and substance abuse awareness page.

Information Literacy

Library Skills and Resources

- ❑ If my learning management system (such as Blackboard) does not already include library links, my school's library website is linked into my course's main menu. I also have a content folder or section focusing on library tools and research. This includes a library guide for my relevant school or program, literature and database search instructions ("How to search CINAHL"), etc.
- ❑ To assist distance learners, there are links or PDFs about off-campus library use.
- ❑ All my library resource links – articles, ebooks, projects, etc. – have been coded with any needed proxy prefix, so students can access the materials off-campus. Or – I explain how students login remotely to the library to access materials from off-campus.

Evidence Based Practice

- ❑ My course can feature an assignment in which students can use one or two "S" elements from [Haynes' 6S model](#) (or [Melnik's Hierarchy of Evidence](#) model): for example, answering a question by checking a summary such as UpToDate, or the National Guideline Clearinghouse, and at least one systematic review (such as a Cochrane, PubMed, or MEDLINE).
- ❑ Some students may not have been taught EBP yet in the sequence of their program: if this is the case, I can still "scaffold" later, formal learning of EBP. For example, featuring links to different resources, types of evidence featured on Melnik's Pyramid and Hayne's 6S model, so students are familiar with resources and accessing them in an online course.

Social Media

- ❑ I've shared the school's social media policies as a link in the course.
- ❑ I've included a statement that reminds students that when they use social media, they can't share anything that is covered under FERPA and HIPAA law. I can add questions for students to ask before sharing any aspect of their clinical experiences to the web.
- ❑ I've also created an opportunity to assess the learners (such as a test or a short journal entry) on their understanding of HIPAA, FERPA and social media.
- ❑ An assessment or discussion, (utilizing Voicethread, or the creation of simple media by students), can allow course learners to reflect on social media and professionalism.
- ❑ I've checked any third-party podcasts, blogs or social media sites I plan to use for content issues and conflict of interest, using the [Quality Checklists for Health Professions Blogs and Podcasts](#) (Colmers et al, 2015) or a similar tool.
- ❑ To help learners gain critical-thinking and media assessment skills, if my course features crowd-sourced information (such as posts tagged with #FOAMED), I selected sources that incorporate peer review and discussion (such as the [ALiEM blog](#) and its [MEDIC series](#)). Or, I pair it with peer-reviewed information on the same topic (such as a journal article, Cochrane review, etc).

Information Literacy (continued)

Copyright, Fair Use and Creative Commons

- ☐ I've confirmed that all materials and resources in my course cite their original source, from texts to websites, to multimedia. I've added direct links for web-based materials.
- ☐ I have a short definition that explains the difference between public domain material, [Creative Commons materials](#), and fair use of copyrighted material, and have tie-in links that are relevant to the health science field.
- ☐ I also include a statement explaining to learners that using public domain, or Creative Commons-licensed, text or media, is still considered academic plagiarism if placed in their work without proper citations.
- ☐ There is an assignment, discussion or other activity allowing students to use Creative Commons-licensed, and/or public domain materials.

Plagiarism

- ☐ I've included a definition of plagiarism, and the school and department policy on plagiarism.
- ☐ Additional relevant plagiarism resources from my campus are provided, and I've included outside resources that give some more context to plagiarism in my field and the world as a whole.
- ☐ I've also included a sample work that shows an example of plagiarism (such as omitting in-text citations).

Professionalism and Community Practice

Community Creation & Group Relations

- ☐ I offer an icebreaker or similar exercise for distance learners, encouraging introductions and questions on the course discussion board.
- ☐ I have more than one form of communication open to my learners – Voicethread, discussion boards, blogs, etc.
- ☐ Discussion topics are open-ended, reflective and avoid “I agree/me too” responses.
- ☐ A rubric defines participation standards in the class, and how I would like peers in the course to interact with one another (e.g. frequency, originality).

Student Self-Reflection and Metacognition

- ☐ A self-assessment helps students and other learners consider how prepared they are to learn online.
- ☐ Learners are also given an assignment, group project or discussion that allows them to describe and design their own learning goals, and an individual and/or group plan for achieving their goals.
- ☐ There is an assignment where students can discuss cases online with one another, as well as general concepts and trends that tie cases together.
- ☐ I have specific reflective questions in mind that I will be asking learners in response to their posts on discussion boards, blogs, and journals in the course.

HIPAA and FERPA

- ☐ There are links to [HHS.gov's](#) Health Information Privacy website, HIPAA website, and the FERPA summary provided by the Department of Education.

Professionalism and Community Practice (continued)

Professionalism

- ☐ I have a link to my school's professionalism page, the fraud and abuse hotline, and regarding bullying, harassment or disrespectful behavior.

Assessments

- ☐ I have a template, and a rubric, for the most challenging assignment(s) in my course.
- ☐ With a competency students are working towards, I also give them opportunities to get formative feedback, and clearly differentiate this feedback from regular evaluations.
- ☐ If I have less time to provide feedback for tests and quizzes, I can provide it to the group, giving a chance for corrections and practice.
- ☐ I can adapt the one minute paper format as a qualitative "pop quiz". This can help measure where students' current knowledge is, before starting a new challenge in the course.
- ☐ Where group work is expected, I've also provided learners with a group rubric, specifying not only how the assignment should be completed, but expectations for different roles in the group, if necessary.

Technology Literacy

Tech Literacy

- ☐ I define any necessary technology my learners will need to use in the course, along with any resources that will help learners pick up the new skill rapidly.

Multimedia

- ☐ My videos and animations use multimedia learning principles. For instance, instead of creating one long video, I chunk my videos so they have shorter running times.
- ☐ My videos and animations can feature narration, but don't have a lot of visual text on the screen. For accessibility reasons, I do have a transcript or captions available for turning on or off, but having titles that fill up the screen in my videos breaks best practices based on cognitive load theory ([Mayer and Moreno, 2003](#)). My learners will find it more difficult to remember text if it's both posted on the screen and spoken aloud; it's best that it just be narrated with animations, motion, or images only.

Tech Support

- ☐ I have also listed the email, telephone number and websites for technical support.
- ☐ Wherever there are user support pages produced by vendors (Blackboard, Canvas, Voicethread, Tegrity, etc.) I have linked these for student users.

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